

Message Text

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SUBJ: FULBRIGHT VISIT AND IIE-GMAF DISCUSSIONS REGARDING GOV
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN THE US

REF: CARACAS AIRGRAM 61, MAY 21

SUMMARY: EX-SENATOR J WILLIAM FULBRIGHT, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE;
WALLACE B EDGERTON, PRESIDENT; AND GEORGE HALL, CONSULTANT; ALL OF
THE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, VISIT CARACAS MAY 11-15.
MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT PEREZ AND OTHER TOP GOV OFFICIALS HELPED
THE IIE TO IMPROVE ITS IMAGE, RESOLVE ITS POLICY DIFFERENCES WITH THE
GMAF AND ENHANCE ITS CHANCES FOR CONTINUATION OF GMAF PROGRAM
ADMINISTRATION IN THE US. END SUMMARY.

1. THE VISIT HAD TWO OBJECTIVES: 1 TO STRENGTHEN RAPPORT WITH
THE VENEZUELAN GOVT, THE SUPPORT OF WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO THE
SUCCESS OF THE GMA PROGRAM IN THE US AND 2 TO MEET WITH THE
DIRECTOR OF THE GRAN MARISCAL DE AYACUCHO FOUNDATION, DR RUTH LERNER
DE ALMEA, IN AN EFFORT TO RESOLVE POLICY DIFFERENCES AND STRENGTHEN
PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH GMAF STAFF.

2. IN REGARD TO THE FIRST PURPOSE, THE IIE GROUP MET WITH
PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ; MINISTER OF EDUCATION LUIS MANUEL
PENALVER; MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DR ESCOVAR SALOM; MINISTER
OF STATE FOR PLANNING (CORDIPLAN) DR GUMERSINDO RODRIQUEZ;
PRESIDENT OF PETROLERA VENEZOLANA GENERAL RAFAEL ALFONSO RAVARD;
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AND GOVERNOR OF THE FEDERAL DISTRICT, DIEGO ARRIA.

3. THE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA ON MAY 12 WAS PRECEDED BY A BRIEFING OVER BREAKFAST BY AMBASSADOR SHLAUDEMAN, DCM ASENIO, PAO HIGGINS AND CAO DAMBRAVA. A FORTY-MINUTE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT BEGAN WITH A PROLONGED DISCUSSION ON AGRICULTURE AND POLITICS. THEN SENATOR FULBRIGHT TURNED TO THE VENEZUELAN OVERSEAS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. HE POINTED OUT THE PARALLELS BETWEEN THE FULBRIGHT-HAYS PROGRAM AND THE PROGRAM OF THE GMA. PRESIDENT PEREZ EXPRESSED GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH THE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION IN THE US. HE SAID THAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PROGRAM IT LACKED AN ADEQUATE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND THAT PROBLEMS THUS HAD TO BE EXPECTED. HOWEVER, HE UNDERSTOOD THAT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN IIE AND GMA WERE GOING WELL.

4. EDGERTON AND HALL HAD TWO LONG SESSIONS WITH DR ALMEA TO REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION IN THE US. THE DISCUSSIONS WERE FRIENDLY, ALTHOUGH UNUSUALLY CANDID. DR ALMEA DISCUSSED IN DETAIL HER MAIN PROBLEM, WHICH HAS A STRONG POLITICAL OVERTONE. SHE STATED THAT ONLY A MINORITY OF THE STUDENTS ARE AFFILIATED WITH ACCION DEMOCRATICA, AND THAT A LARGE RADICAL GROUP HAS CREATED CONSTANT PROBLEMS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE VENEZUELAN PRESS. DR ALMEA'S MAIN CONCERN WAS THAT NEWLY SLECTED GMA CANDIDATES ALSO INCLUDE A LARGE PROPORTION OF LEFTIST-ORIENTED STUDENTS. GMAF'S PROBLEM IS HOW TO AVPID SDNING SUCH INDIVIDUALS. IT APPEARS AT THIS JUNCTURE THAT THE GOV MUST ADOPT A NEW POLICY REGARDING FOREIGN SCHOLARSHIPS SENDING ABROAD ONLY GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO ARE WELL KNOWN TO THE EDUCATION AUTHORITIES IN VENEZUELA.

5. MEDIA REACTION THROUGHOUT THE VISIT WAS EXTENSIVE AND MOST FAVORABLE BOTH TO THE EX-SENATOR AND THE IIE.

6. SENATOR FULBRIGHT'S VISIT STRONGLY IMPROVED THE IIE'S BARGAINING POSITION AND ENHANCED ITS CHANCES TO CONTINUE ADMINISTRATION OF THE GRAN MARISCAL DE AYACUCHO SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. THE IMMEPIATE IMPACT WAS NOTED BY A CHANGED ATTITUDE OF THE IIE'S HERETOFORE PRINCIPAL CRITIC, MINISTER OF STATE FOR PLANNING GUMERSINDO RODRIGUEZ, WHO LAST NOVEMBER HAD INSISTED THAT IIE'S 32 MILLION DOLLAR CONTRACT BE TERMINATED. RODRIGUEZ STRESSED TO FULBRIGHT THE NEED FOR THE EMBASSY TO COOPERATE IN WORKING OUT SOLUTIONS; LAST NOV HE HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VETOED THE PROPOSED GMA-IIE CONTRACT BUT WAS OVERRULED BY PRESIDENT PEREZ. THE MINISTER APPEARED TO BE SATISFIED AT PRESENT WITH THE STATUS QUO AND EXPRESSED THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE PERSONALLY IN THE IIE'LIBERATIONS TO HELP RESOLVE PROBLEMS. HE ALSO NOTED THAT A MAJOR PROBLEM FACING THE GMAF AND THE GOV WAS TO HANDLE THE RADICAL STUDENT ELEMENT.

6. DR ALMEA'S PROPOSAL TO BEGIN NEGOTIATION OF A 1977 CONTRACT IN

THE NEAR FUTURE IS ANOTHER INDICATION THAT THE IIE IS LIKELY TO
CONTINUE OPERATIONS HERE. FOR THE FIRST TIME, KEY GOVT OFFICIALS
ADMITTED THAT THE DIFFICULTIES WITH THE SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS OVERSEAS
WERE BASICALLY POLITICAL AND THAT THEIIE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A TARGET
OF UNFOUNDED CRITICISM. THE IIE'S WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT A USIS
SUGGESTION TO DONATE THE 40,000 DOLLAR ORIENTATION AND TRAINING
"PACKAGE" HELPED TO MINIMIZE A WIDESPREAD CRITICISM THAT IIE'S INTERE
ST
WAS FINANCIAL RATHER THAN ACADEMIC. SMEFFFTATOR FULBRIGHT'S
PRESITGE HELPED AND CONVISED KEY VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS THAT
THE IIE MERITS THE GOV'S RECONGNITION AND ACCEPTANCE AS PROBABLY
THE ONLY INSTITUTION ABLE TO HANDLE THIS VAST PROJECT.

7. FOR DETAILS, SEE CARACAS AIRGRAM 61.
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